

Message Text

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22

ACTION AF-06

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04 H-02

INR-07 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15

USIA-06 COME-00 EB-07 FBO-02 A-01 IO-11 /086 W

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R 241528Z FEB 76

FM AMEMBASSY LAGOS

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 3501

INFO AMEMBASSY ABIDJAN

AMEMBASSY ACCRA

AMEMBASSY COTONOU

AMEMBASSY LOME

AMEMBASSY LONDON

AMEMBASSY MONROVIA

AMEMBASSY NDJAMENA

AMEMBASSY YAOUNDE

AMCONSUL DOUALA

AMCONSUL IBADAN

AMCONSUL KADUNA

C O N F I D E N T I A L LAGOS 2236

E. O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, NI

SUBJ: WHAT TO DO ABOUT XENOPHOBIA IN THE NIGERIAN PRESS?

REF : LAGOS 2021

1. SUMMARY: THE NIGERIAN PRESS HAS BEEN STRIDENT IN ITS XENOPHOBIA ATTITUDE SINCE FEB 13 ABORTIVE COUP. IN ONE ARTICLE IN GOVERNMENT-OWNED PAPER USG THROUGH CIA WAS ACCUSED OF ENGINEERING THE ASSASSINATION OF MUHAMMED. THE AMBASSADOR HAS EXPRESSED OUR CONCERN OVER TONE OF PRESS ARTICLES TO MEA OFFICIALS HERE. EMBASSY RECOMMENDS THAT AMBASSADOR SANU BE CALLED IN AND INFORMED OF USG'S DISPLEASURE OVER THESE FALSE ACCUSATIONS OF AMERICAN COMPLICITY IN THE ABORTIVE COUP PLOT. END SUMMARY

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2. IN ADDITION TO POINTS ALREADY REPORTED REGARDING MY CONVERSA-

TION WITH UCHUNO FEB 18 (REFTEL LAGOS 2021), I RAISED WITH HIM THEN MY CONCERN OVER TONE OF NIGERIAN PRESS REFERENCES TO ALLEGED FOREIGN IMPLICATION IN DIMKA'S COUP ATTEMPT. A NUMBER OF THE EDITORIALS, SIGNED ARTICLES, AND LETTERS TO THE EDITOR REPRESENTED IN MY VIEW A CLEAR INCITEMENT TO VIOLENCE AND A DIRECT CONTRADICTION TO NEW HEAD OF STATE OBASANJO'S APPEAL FOR CALM.

3. UCHUNO GAVE THE USUAL REPLY THAT THE FMG DOES NOT CONTROL THE PRESS. I SAID I WAS NOT SUGGESTING THAT IT DO SO, BUT RATHER THAT ADDITIONAL HIGH-LEVEL APPEALS AGAINST ACTIVITIES THAT MIGHT BREACH THE PEACE, IF CARRIED BY THE PRESS AS I EXPECTED THEY WOULD BE, MIGHT SERVE TO COUNTERACT THE INFLUENCE OF CURRENT INFLAMMATORY PRESS ARTICLES. I CITED IN PARTICULAR A CALL FOR SEARCHING OF HOMES OF BRITISH AND AMERICAN CITIZENS PRINTED IN THE "NEW NIGERIAN," ALONG WITH SUGGESTIONS THAT FOREIGN INFORMATION OFFICES BE CLOSED DOWN, THAT THE SIZE OF FOREIGN MISSIONS BE REDUCED, THAT FOREIGN COMPANIES OF "IMPERIALIST PLOTTERS" BE NATIONALIZED, ETC, ETC.

4. IN PAST FOUR DAYS THERE HAVE BEEN SEVERAL GOVERNMENT STATEMENTS THAT COULD BE INTERPRETED TO SERVE THE PURPOSES I HAD IN MIND. GENERALLY SPEAKING, HOWEVER, CALLS FOR GOOD BEHAVIOR HAVE BEEN PRIMARILY DIRECTED AT FORESTALLING ETHNIC CLASHES BETWEEN NIGERIANS RATHER THAN DISCOURAGING XENOPHOBIC ATTACKS ON THE UK AND THE US. ONE OF THE WORST OF THESE ATTACKS APPEARED FEBRUARY 21, AGAIN IN THE "NEW NIGERIAN" (LAGOS 2103). THE ARTICLE, ENTITLED "THE PASSING OF GENERAL MURTALA MUHAMMED: THE FOREIGN CONNECTION," LINKED MUHAMMED'S EFFORTS TO EMANCIPATE AFRICA FROM "WESTERN DOMINATION, EXPLOITATION AND NEO-COLONIALISM" AND THE FORMER HEAD OF STATE'S REJECTION OF PRESIDENT FORD'S "ARM TWISTING HYPOCRISY TO AFRICA" (A REFERENCE TO ANGOLA) WITH HIS ASSASSINATION. THE AUTHOR ALLEGES THAT THE VOICE OF AMERICA LAMENTED OVER NIGERIA'S REJECTION OF US OVERTURES ON ANGOLA "FOR TWO DAYS IN THE LAST WEEK OF JANUARY 1976." HE THEN CHARGES THAT A DECISION WAS MADE TO "GET RID OF" NIGERIA'S "BELOVED" HEAD OF STATE AND THAT "AS NORMAL, THE IMPERIALISTS DIRECTED THE DUTY TO THE CIA. THIS IS NOT UNPARALLELED TO THE ASSASSINATION OF S.A. ALLENDA, P. LUMUMBA, A. CABRAL ETC. THE CIA IN FULFILLING ITS DUTY, SIMPLY CONNIVED WITH CERTAIN DISLOYAL, DISSIDENT CHAPS WHO LACK NATIONAL CONSCIOUSNESS WHOM I AM ASHAMED TO CALL NIGERIANS BOTH WITHIN AND OUTSIDE THE COUNTRY. CONFIDENTIAL

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THIS IS A FACT. THERE IS NO DOUBT ABOUT THAT." AUTHOR THEN STATES THAT VOA IN BROADCAST ON FEBRUARY 13 COMMENTING ON ABORTIVE COUP SAID THAT THE FMG'S ANGOLAN POLICY "COULD LEAD" TO INTERNAL OPPOSITION. AUTHOR CLAIMS THIS UNTRUE AND THAT WHOLE COUNTRY SUPPORTED MUHAMMED'S ANGOLAN POLICY; THEREFORE THE "...USA'S CONSPIRACY IS HERE UNCOVERED." ARTICLE FURTHER SUGGESTS THAT THERE ARE CIA AGENTS AMONG FOREIGNERS ENGAGED IN TEACHING AND BUSINESS IN COUNTRY AND ASKS FOR FMG INVESTIGATION TO EXPOSE THEM.

5. I DISCUSSED THIS LATEST ARTICLE WITH ACTING DIRECTOR OF PROTOCOL MGBOKWERE YESTERDAY. I SAID I UNDERSTOOD THE FMG'S PROBLEM OF DEALING WITH A "FREE PRESS" BUT WONDERED WHAT WAS THE FMG'S RESPONSIBILITY IN THE CASE OF AN ARTICLE SO CLEARLY INCITING AND DISHONEST WHEN PUBLISHED IN A PAPER OWNED BY THE FMG. HIS RESPONSE WAS LAME, TO THE EFFECT THAT THE GOVERNMENT'S OWNERSHIP WAS ONLY 60 PERCENT AND THAT, AT ANY RATE, THE GOVERNMENT COULD NEVER TELL A NIGERIAN NEWSPAPER WHAT TO PRINT PARTICULARLY WHEN IT WAS A SIGNED ARTICLE. HE SAID HE DOUBTED THE AUTHOR WAS A MEMBER OF THE PAPER'S STAFF.

6. MGBOKWERE THEN SAID, "I SUGGEST YOU NOT PRESS YOUR CONCERN." THIS REMINDED ME OF UCHUNO'S RECOMMENDATION SEVERAL DAYS AGO THAT THE EMBASSY HOLD BACK A BILL FOR DAMAGES SUFFERED IN THE LATEST DEMONSTRATION AT OUR CHANCERY. I WOULD NOT BE SURPRISED TO LEARN THAT FRIENDS OF OURS AT MEA, PERHAPS INCLUDIN GARBA, ARE MAKING CONSCIOUS EFFORT TO SHIELD THE US BY SUGGESTING WAYS IN WHICH WE CAN DIFFERENTIATE OUR POSITION AND OUR TACTICS FROM THOSE OF THE BRITISH. UK HIGH COMMISSION HAS PROTESTED NEW NIGERIAN ATTACKS ON UK.

7. WE SUGGEST THE DEPARTMENT INFORM AMBASSADOR SANU OF OUR CONCERN OVER CONTINUING XENOPHOBIC TONE OF PRESS ALLUSIONS TO US COMPLICITY IN COUP ATTEMPT. MEANWHILE WE WILL REMAIN ALERT FOR APPROPRIATE OCCASION TO FOLLOW-UP AGAIN HERE. IF ASSISTANT SECRETARY SCHAUFLE SEES SANU TO DISCUSS SECRETARY KISSINGER'S PROPOSED VISIT AS SUGGESTED SEPTEL, THIS MATTER COULD BE RAISED THEN.
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